

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

SUBMITTED BY

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BEFORE

**THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES AND THE
ENVIRONMENT REGARDING “EFFORTS TO ADDRESS URBAN
STORMWATER RUNOFF.”**

**MARCH 19, 2009 AT 10:00 A.M.
ROOM 2167 OF THE RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING**

Madam Chairwoman and Ranking Member:

Thank you so much for this opportunity to address your subcommittee on Water Resources and the Environment regarding Kansas City, Missouri's efforts to address urban stormwater runoff. I also want to thank you again, Chairwoman Johnson, for taking time to visit our city last year to review our water facilities and related efforts.

We also appreciate the support you provided to our Congressman, Representative Emanuel Cleaver, in his effort to secure a twenty percent designation for green strategies as an amendment to H.R. 1262, the Water Quality Investment Act of 2009, which passed the House of Representatives just last week. As deliberations on this measure and related measures proceed, we look forward to working with you to ensure the provision of enhanced federal resources, including direct grants to communities with sewer control plans, which are needed to assist communities such as Kansas City. Truly and without equivocation, your commitment to improving our nation's water infrastructure is commended and appreciated.

In terms of today's hearing, I pleased to report that our community's vision for Kansas City is to become America's Green Region. As you know from your visit to our city, we have a seriously outdated system that was built over 100 years ago. Moreover, we face the dual challenges of meeting modern-day demand and investing strategies required by the future. In this regard, our region is committed to investing in green infrastructure not only to address our water quality issues but also to create jobs and enhance our citizen's quality of life.

Kansas City is so committed to this vision, we developed through a five-year community driven process, a Green Solutions Position Paper, which is attached and hereby incorporated into this testimony by reference. This paper was endorsed by City Council resolution and embraced by our City staff through various implementation initiatives. This document provides the foundation for our recent submittal of Kansas City's Overflow Control Plan to the US Environmental Protection Agency. This plan includes a significant investment in green infrastructure and green initiatives to help address our combined sewer overflow problem.

Kansas City also adopted a cutting edge stream setback ordinance, which is the backbone to our green infrastructure program. We also changed our development codes to encourage low impact design approaches. These green initiatives will help us prevent problems in the future but it will not address the massive flooding issues we have in our already developed areas, which is estimated at \$2.1 billion. This also does not include the \$2.4 billion we need to invest in our sewer plan. As our forefathers did 150 years ago, it is now our generation's time to reinvest in our aging stormwater and wastewater infrastructure using green technologies to enhance its function.

In Kansas City, there are three issues associated with green infrastructure:

1. Green solutions are a relatively new technology in Kansas City. We need to better understand the true costs and benefits and the long-term impacts of this approach. The two biggest barriers to success are time and money. We will need time to innovate and a significant investment to realize and evaluate the actual impacts to water quality. We look forward to a partnership with the federal government to move ahead with green solutions on the scale needed in Kansas City.
2. Green solutions are only one part of the overall strategy to manage Kansas City's wet weather issues. While green solutions will not completely replace the need for new gray infrastructure such as pipes, storage facilities and plant upgrades, it will enhance our neighborhoods and we hope they will reduce the level of investment we need to make in gray, traditional infrastructure. Green solutions are designed to manage small storms but don't address the heavy rains we have in Kansas City that cause loss of life and extensive property damage.
3. Stormwater management, in most cities across the country, is typically underfunded. These facilities are out-of-sight, out-of-mind. Green infrastructure is not out-of-sight. The plant materials of green infrastructure create a visual presence above ground and not only require more frequent attention but a different type of maintenance. On-going maintenance of green infrastructure is typically left to the local government and in any economic situation, is difficult to fund. State & federal funding for green

Kansas Citians value natural resources. Protecting water as a valuable resource is a top priority. Kansas City is embracing green solutions while recognizing the risks associated with this strategy. The level of investment needed and risks are great. It is our hope that Congress and the Administration work hand-in-hand with local governments to explore and implement the green infrastructure approach.

I want to thank you again for allowing me to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions.